



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 1
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

Ninepipe WMA Wetland Habitat Restoration Plan Decision Notice

September 8, 2009

Proposal:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) purchased the 200-acre Ringneck Ranch in 2005 and 2009, and the 62-acre Davis property in 2006 and 2007. The properties are located adjacent to the existing Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Lake County, Montana. The proposal is to restore drained wetland habitats and create new wetlands on this property for the benefit of resident and migratory waterfowl, upland birds, and native water bird species. Ducks Unlimited, in cooperation with FWP, has designed the wetland restoration project. The Ninepipe WMA and surrounding lands provide long-term habitat for upland bird, migratory waterfowl, and other wildlife habitat in the Mission Valley. FWP and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) also work cooperatively through the Flathead Indian Reservation Fish and Wildlife Board and State-Tribal Bird Hunting & Fishing Agreement to establish hunting seasons for upland birds and migratory waterfowl, and implement conservation programs.

Environmental Policy Act Process:

FWP is required to assess potential impacts of the proposed project to the human and physical environment. In compliance with requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), a draft environmental assessment (EA) was completed by FWP and released for a two-week public comment period on August 12, 2009. Public notices were posted in local newspapers and libraries, and copies of the EA were available at the Region One headquarters in Kalispell and on the FWP website.

Public Comments:

Four comments were received, all in favor of the project. There were no modifications to the draft EA based on public comment, and the draft EA and decision notice serve as the final document.

Summary of Issues Addressed in the EA:

FWP proposes to establish approximately 124 acres of wetlands in areas where they have historically been present before being drained for farming and to construct new wetlands in area where they are strategically located for overall WMA habitat enhancement. FWP has completed similar habitat enhancement projects within the WMA in the past, which are now healthy functioning wetlands supporting a variety of waterfowl, small mammals, and invertebrates.

The CSKT Tribal Preservation Office performed a Cultural and Historical Sites Review for the proposed restoration areas. In their report dated September 2, 2009, they state that the potential exists for encountering historical or cultural sites. Therefore, consultation will be maintained with the Tribal Preservation Office throughout the duration of this project.

Decision

Through the MEPA process, FWP found no significant impacts on the human or physical environments associated with this proposal. Therefore, the EA is the appropriate level of analysis, and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Based on the EA and public comment, it is my decision to accept the Ninepipe WMA Wetland Habitat Restoration Plan as written.



9/8/09

James R. Satterfield Jr., Ph.D.
Regional Supervisor

Date